

FEVER OF THE GAME

It Led the Lieutenant to Stake Money Not His Own.

WAS DRUMMER'S LUCKY TIME

How a Two-Dollar Limit Poker Contest Grew Into Larger Proportions—Soldier Ended It by Jumping From Train.

It was early in the days of transcontinental railroading, and customs on the cars were much the same as on the most of the Western railroads, so it was not especially remarkable that they had been playing poker for some 24 hours in the smoking compartment of one of the vehicles in those days called sleeping cars.

It was not a very stiff game at first. Two-dollar limit may lead to the transfer of considerable sums of money in even less than 24 hours, unless to those of limited means, and the four men who played had at least the appearance of prosperity.

Of the four, the one who had proclaimed himself a drummer seemed the least skilled. He followed the game readily enough, and was perfectly familiar with the values of the hands, asking only one question at the beginning of the play. That was the stereotyped query at that period.

"Do you play straight?" he asked, and when told in a rather contemptuous tone that straight were not recognized, he seemed rather relieved.

But, although the drummer seemed fairly familiar with poker, he did not appear to be deft with the cards. He shuffled overhand and fumbled the pasteboards somewhat awkwardly in dealing, so that he dealt slowly enough to rouse a trifle of impatience in the others. As time was the one thing they all had too much of, however, there was no remonstrance.

But, although he played as one unaccustomed to frequent indulgence, there was no lack of confidence in his game when he believed himself to be strong. He caught a pair of jacks before the draw in one deal on which the doctor opened the pot under the guns. It had been sweetened several times before being opened, so the doctor opened for the limit.

The lieutenant found enough in his hand to justify the investment of \$2, so he clipped in. Then the old gentleman who had been coaxed into the game so as to avoid an empty seat, decided to take a chance, so that when it came to the drummer a pair of jacks did not appear to be a specially alluring hand.

He did not hesitate, however, but threw in his two blue chips and picked up the deck to serve the draw. The opener took two cards, the lieutenant one and the old gentleman three. Then the drummer dealt himself three, and found when he looked at them a pair of sevens.

The doctor bet the limit, the lieutenant dropped, the old gentleman stayed and the drummer raised it \$2. He realized how bold the play was, but he had the satisfaction of seeing the doctor hesitate, just for an instant, before raising in return, and when the old gentleman dropped the drummer boosted it \$2 more.

"That set the doctor thinking. Finally he said:

"I give you credit for a hand, but there's too much money in the pot to let you steal it. I call."

And he showed his pair of kings with the ace he held up for a kicker. That had been early in the game, and when the others saw the hand that the drummer had backed so boldly they formed an estimate none too flattering of the quality of his play.

Possibly this estimate, too firmly fixed in the minds of the other three, had some thing to do with the fact that the drummer, as the day darkened into night and the night paled into the gray half-light of the dawn had gradually increased his winning till he had some \$200 in front of him in money and chips over and above the single stack of blues that he had bought on beginning.

He was not the only winner, for the old gentleman had nearly a hundred in velvet. He had seemed reluctant to play at first, but being in the game he bore himself with all the gallantry of a veteran, and perhaps by the aid of a swallow of whisky every two hours or so seemed as fresh as when the game began.

The doctor was also bright of eye and alert in manner as at the beginning, though he was the heaviest loser. The loss of his money, however, seemed to trouble him as little as the loss of sleep, and he played on imperturbably.

The lieutenant, however, seemed rather hard-pushed. It was not until afterward that they learned that he had been on a month's leave and had seen nearly everything in San Francisco that was worth seeing excepting his bedroom for the whole of the 30 days.

Now, well set-up and well groomed, after the fashion among army officers, he looked fit for any effort, but as a matter of fact, he was feeling the effect of the long strain.

It was he who, as they sipped the coffee they had ordered a little before sunrise, suggested a change in the game.

"Why not play table stakes?" he said. "This limit game is poor poker at the best, and a few hours of a swifter game will be more satisfactory than all day at this."

"I've been wishing for a long time that somebody would propose that," said the drummer, "but I didn't like to do it, being so much ahead."

"Suits me," said the old gentleman, and the doctor nodded, so the game was reorganized immediately.

The two losers put in a hundred each, and the winners let their money lie on the table. Under the changed conditions, the three players still saw, or thought they saw, a tendency on the part of the drummer to overplay his hand, though by some marvel-

ous luck he did not often pay the penalty for his rashness.

On one of the deals the lieutenant opened a \$6 jackpot for the size of it, and after the old gentleman had stayed, the drummer made it \$12 to play. It was too strong for the doctor, who laid down, and the lieutenant did not care to re-raise, so he simply made good, and the old gentleman trailed.

The lieutenant took three, the old gentleman three and the drummer one. The lieutenant watched him closely as he picked up the one card, and clearly perceived a shadow of disappointment on his face.

He therefore bet \$10 with considerable confidence—too much, in fact, for the old gentleman, who threw down his cards. The drummer, however, without hesitation, threw in a twenty-dollar bill, and the lieutenant was staggered.

He studied a long time, but finally said: "I can't raise a one-card draw, but I'm hanged if I believe you filled. I'll call you, anyhow. I've got kings."

And he showed down his pair, but the drummer spread his hand on the board, and they saw that he had made a pair of aces in drawing to a four flush.

"I don't suppose," said the doctor, in a perfectly even tone, "that a man is really to be blamed for having an overdose of that sort of luck, but I suppose it is thoroughly well understood that nobody can expect to remain very popular among the others in the community while it lasts."

"I should say not," growled the lieutenant, as he shuffled the cards for his deal, but the drummer replied with more spirit than they had expected.

"I reckon there's other ways of getting popularity," he said, "that's out of sight better than winning at poker, but I notice there ain't many men that like play to lose. If anybody doesn't like the way I play my cards he has a perfect right to play his up against 'em for the size of my pile."

"I think I'll take a hack at that proposition," said the lieutenant as the doctor cut the cards, and before dealing he put his hand in an inside pocket and pulled out a small roll of big bills. Skinning off five \$100 bills, he laid them in front of him and resumed his play.

The old gentleman said nothing, but, looking carefully at his pile, he saw that it was considerably under \$200, and he pulled out \$300 out from his pocket and declared that in the game. "I reckon I'll worry along on this," said the doctor, who had been playing with extra caution since the game had been made table stakes, and who had something over his hundred still in front of him.

The drummer said nothing. His pile was growing satisfactorily.

They all passed out on the lieutenant's deal, making another jackpot, and it was sweetened up to \$10 before any one opened.

Then the lieutenant caught three tens and opened it for \$10. The old gentleman dropped, and the drummer the lieutenant, with a savage gleam in raised it \$10, the doctor stayed, and his eye, made it \$50 more.

"That'll hold you for a little, I think," he said; but the drummer went back at him with a hundred more. It was too much for the doctor, and he folded.

Angry as the lieutenant now was, he did not care to go further before the draw, so he made good, and called for two cards. To his intense joy he caught the fourth ten, and when the drummer called for one card he did not wait for him to pick up the draw, but threw a hundred in the pot.

The drummer looked carefully at his card before paying any attention to the play. Then he said, slowly, and as if doubtfully:

"I reckon this hand ought to be good, I'll tap you."

With that he pushed his entire pile forward. It was larger than the lieutenant's, but the latter called him for what he had—about \$250.

Then the drummer showed four queens.

It seemed to stagger the lieutenant, and the doctor looked curiously at him as he went very white about the lips, but he steadied himself with an effort, and pulling out his roll again, he laid it on the table without counting it.

As they found out later there was a little over a thousand dollars in it, but they were all stricken with the fever of the game apparently, and the doctor put five hundred more on the table, while the others rested.

The hard blow the lieutenant had just received proved to be only the beginning of bad luck, as sharp as it was short. He lost two hundred to the old gentleman on three sevens, three hundred to the drummer on aces up against three little ones, all in the course of a dozen deals.

Then the old gentleman dealt the cards, there being a jackpot, and the drummer opened it. Each of the other three raised in turn as it came to him, so it cost the drummer \$20 more to play.

He put up his \$30 very deliberately and added \$50 to it, but again each man raised it as his turn came, so that it was \$50 more for him to play.

He put \$300 in the pot without a word, and this seemed to set the others thinking. They all came in, but there was no more raises, so that there was over \$1,500 in the pot before the draw.

When the old gentleman prepared to serve the cards they all stood pat, and the drummer pushed his pile forward again. It was somewhat larger than that of any of the others, but they all called for what they had, and after the pot had been carefully portioned off to show the side money they all spread their hands on the board.

The doctor's was an ace flush, the lieutenant's a seven full, and the old gentleman's a tray full, but the drummer showed four eights.

There was very little said, but they all rose from the table, and as they started to leave the compartment the doctor threw his arm up with a quick motion as if to catch the lieutenant, whom he had been watching carefully and professionally for an hour, and who staggered slightly.

The young soldier recovered himself instantly, and turning, said with a smile:

"Thank you, doctor, but it's nothing. Only a cramp in my foot from sitting so long, and I need fresh air. I think

I'll step out on the platform for a few minutes before I turn in."

His manner was natural, and they thought nothing of it at the moment, as he stepped outside. But as the doctor went toward his compartment he happened to notice that the train was on a high trestle crossing a deep canyon.

With a muttered exclamation he turned and stepped quickly to the car door. As he opened it he saw the lieutenant plunge headlong into the abyss 1,500 feet below.

Not till some years afterward did he learn, quite by accident, that the lieutenant had a considerable sum of money with him at the time which belonged to the regimental funds.—Washington Post.

STRANGER THAN FICTION.

Crew Was Shipwrecked on a Floating Island of Rice Pudding.

Lawyer Abraham Levy has been sojourning in the Catskills.

The other night he returned to his hotel after a long mountain tramp somewhat late for supper. He was very hungry and found little fault with what was set before him until at the end of the belated meal the waiter brought a portion of rice pudding, saying: "This is all the desert there's left, Mr. Levy."

A look of horror overspread the lawyer's face. "Take it away!" he gasped. "The sight of it brings to my mind the awfullest experience that ever befel a man who lived to tell the tale!"

Later, when he had recovered his composure somewhat, he was asked, as he had lived, to tell the tale.

"I will sketch it briefly," he said, "for I would fain dismiss the horror of it from my mind forever."

"It was some 10 years ago, and I was in Galveston, Texas, on some legal business. This being finished I thought the rest and sea voyage would do me good, and so took passage to New York on an iron steamship, part passenger boat and part freighter."

"It had a mixed cargo, principally rice in bulk. There were 100 barrels of oil in the lower hold beneath the rice, and a deck cargo of sugar, together with several hundred dozens of eggs in crates packed in ice."

"We had a pleasant and uneventful voyage until we were off Hatteras, where we ran into a terrific storm. We rode it out safely and were congratulating ourselves upon the fact that it had done no harm except spoiling the bulk rice with sea water that had flooded the hatches, when a bolt of lightning struck the forward mast and descended into the lower hold, setting fire to the barrels of oil."

"The confined flames soon had the sea water and rice boiling in the hold above. The steam from this expanded the cases of eggs and barrels of sugar, and their contents mingling together, ran down into the hatches the steam had forced open and mingled with the boiling rice, together with a dozen boxes of spices we were also carrying in our cargo."

"You may be aware how boiling rice will swell. One cup cooked with make a gallon measure or more. Imagine the strain when 500 tons were boiling. The staunch steel ship stood the strain bravely for a while, and then with a loud report the ship parted, the iron hull and upper works sinking, and nothing was left floating upon the ocean but a monster desert island of rice cooked with salt water, sugar, spices and eggs."

"The boats had been swept away, and as the ship parted the captain cried: 'Jump for your lives! And we scrambled upon the floating mass of rice mixed with sugar, eggs and spices, which, freed from the confinement of the ship, rose and spread until it made a floating island of perfectly cooked rice pudding a mile long and a half mile wide."

"Here we floated for 14 days, living upon rice pudding until off Cape May we were sighted by the fishing smack Myrtle B. and rescued from our perilous position."

"Do you wonder that the sight of rice pudding horrifies me?"—New York Evening World.

WONDERFUL HORNS

Of the Alaskan Moose Have a Spread of Seventy-Eight Inches.

After all has been said about the horns of the world's greatest horned animals, there are positively none that equal in impressiveness the gigantic mass that crowns the head of a really big Alaskan moose. Take them in situ, as the geologists say, on the head of their rightful owner, and in length, breadth and thickness they inspire in the mind of every intelligent human being a feeling of genuine awe.

I do not see how even an intelligent dog or horse can behold a pair of 70-inch moose antlers without being profoundly impressed. The antler springs horizontally from an upper corner of the head, on a stem of solid bone that is like the trunk of a hickory sapling. A foot or so from the hurr it throws off toward the front, quite gratuitously as it were, two or three big spurs of bone that are of much use in a fight. As soon as there is room for real development, the main stem flattens out into an enormous slab of bone, perhaps two inches in thickness, from 12 to 18 inches wide, and from two to three feet long. This is the "palmation," and a very appropriate name it is, too; for in the center it is hollowed like a human palm, and studied along its upper edge with from six to twelve fingers and thumbs of solid bone.

In sheer exuberance of strength, and excess of horn material, an Alaskan moose antler occasionally throws off from the lower surface of its palm, or it may be from the front of the beam, a big, rugged spur-root of bone, which always has an extra-impressive effect on the beholder. The largest antlers of Alaskan moose are in the Field Museum, at Chicago. They have a spread of 78 1-2 inches, and weigh 93 1-2 pounds.—Scribner's Magazine.

Is Telling Everything He Knows.

Secretary Taft's reminder to the Filipinos that they will not be fit to govern themselves for "a generation at least" reveals that he has not yet mastered the Ohio straddle.—Milwaukee Free News

RUSSIAN PRIEST

Buried Alive With a Corpse to Break a Prolonged Drought.

A pope, or Russian village priest, has been buried alive by a mob of peasants in Crimea.

The people had ascribed the prolonged drought which has ruined their crops this season to the death of a certain old man who had been regarded as a wizard, no ruin having fallen since his burial in March last.

According to the popular superstition, it was necessary, in order to appease the sorcerer's spirit, that his remains should be exhumed at midnight, and, after being sprinkled with holy water by a priest, replaced in the grave.

Accordingly on Sunday night a procession of villagers, headed by boys and girls carrying torches and accompanied by fiddlers and flautists playing dismal dirges, set out for the cemetery.

The body of the dead wizard was duly exhumed and placed in a sitting posture against a tree, around which 40 or 50 of the peasants danced a weird dance to the accompaniment of the village musicians.

In the midst of the curious ceremonial Father Constantin, the village pope, arrived, and upbraided them for their superstition.

The crowd at this grew indignant. Some among them who were under the influence of vodka, shouted that he was the real wizard, as the spirit of the dead man had entered into his body. The priest was accordingly seized, and, despite his shrieks for mercy, was hurled by four of the men into the reopened grave, the remains of the corpse being flung in after him with earth and stones.—Odessa Cor. London Standard.

A Bird in Hand.

On a cabbage patch owned by a negro in a Southern community, oil was found. Speculators offered the negro \$20,000, which was accepted without waiting to consider another proposition, said to be worth \$40,000.

"What is this about your cabbage patch?" inquired a neighbor to the negro. "I understand you have sold it for \$20,000."

"Yass, that's true, boss," replied the negro. "Yo' see, men come pickin' round my place an' dey say dey's oil beah. Dey say, 'We giv yo' \$20,000.' I say 'All right.'"

"I am told if you had waited a day or two you might have sold it for \$40,000."

"Yass, massa, dat mebbe so; but a bird in the hand's th' nobles' work of God!"—Philadelphia Ledger

It is simply impossible to get any month out of the twelve to live in to the magazine poetry that is written about it.—Chicago News.

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